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RUEAHND/CDRJTFB SOTO CANO HO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 000464

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2019

TAGS: ASEC HO PGOV PREL SOCI

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ZELAYA'S LIMOSINE RECEIVES TWO IMPACTS
TO WINDSHIELD - ATTACK DISCOUNTED - MOST LIKELY ROCKS

REF: TEGUCIGALPA

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reason 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) In the evening of June 12, local media reported a possible attack against President Manual "Mel" Zelaya after the front windshield of the motorcade vehicle in which he was riding in Tegucigalpa received two impacts from objects of unknown origin. The unknown objects cracked the windshield but did not shatter it or penetrate to the interior of the vehicle. The incident occurred while the motorcade, consisting of two lead motorcycles, a lead security vehicle, Zelaya's limousine (an unarmored Lexus SUV) and a follow security vehicle, were on their way to the airport via Tegucigalpa's outer ring highway in the vicinity of the El Loarque neighborhood. Immediately after Zelaya's vehicle was impacted by the unknown objects, all the vehicles in the motorcade came to a stop on the highway and President Zelaya and his security personnel got out of their vehicles to inspect the damage. Police responded to the location to investigate as did the press. President Zelaya remained at the scene for some time afterwards where he responded to questions from the press about the incident.

¶2. (C) While the press at first sensationalized reports of the incident, President Zelaya quickly downplayed it in a series of interviews. The president, his chief-of-staff, and Security Minister Jorge Rodas later told the Ambassador that the impacts were most likely caused by rocks, not bullets.

¶3. (C) On June 15, National Police Director General Saloman de Jesus Escoto Salinas told the RSO that the impacts to President Zelaya's vehicle were not caused by bullet strikes or by someone throwing objects at the vehicle, but were likely caused by rocks kicked-up by the lead vehicle in the motorcade which impacted the President's vehicle following directly behind it.

¶4. (U) The press criticized the response of President Zelaya's security for stopping and remaining on the scene with President Zelaya, as well as Security Ministry Rodas for admitting to the press that the President's vehicle was not armored.

LLORENS